

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

Volume 9 - Number 4

May 24, 1969

Chicago, Illinois

An Educational Group

During many years of teaching, a teacher may have thousands and thousands of young ladies as pupils. The percentage of girls to boys in our school (which has more boys than most schools) is possibly 50 to 1. Many schools have no boys at all. Then, why are there not more excellent girls in the profession?

The reasons are manifold; not easy to interpret with a simple explanation. However, after 42 years of teaching, I feel that the knowledge and experience gained from teaching makes it possible for me to offer some conclusions worth mentioning.

Competition is keen and there are many girls for every opening in the theater. If one is easily discouraged and not thoroughly prepared technically, life-wise and with a strong will power, it would be best to remain at home. Individuality and belief in one's own capabilities can help but is certainly not everything.

Let us first consider the successful woman in the profession. Compared to an average girl she is more single-minded in her desires; often unprincipled in attaining them, with an intrepid determination, emotionally matriarchal by nature in that she will have her own way, often more masculine than feminine but without the sensitivity of the male. I do not mean to imply that all successful women in the theater are this thing, but a very small percentage are of modest demeanor. It is true, that most successful women do come up the hard way, with many obstacles in their way and must often develop these traits.

Girls are sheltered and cared for by their parents so will always lack the courage for the absolute independence necessary to make a career. The biological urge is always in the background and when things get too tough they acquiesce to what they believe is an easier life. So all in all, marriage claims ninety percent of these students. Also let's face it all do not have the talent required. After

marriage an attempt is made to "keep up" but that soon must go, often, because the husband does not share the interest.

On the good side, many girls end up in related artistic work where they can make use of their dance background. Often girls who made good marriages are able to lead successful lives as singers or actresses in the theater or on TV. In this respect their training is put to excellent use. No good training is truly wasted. What it does for body development, health and carriage never goes unused.

It is a common fault of all young people not to want to be just a "part" of an artistic event; unless they are featured they seem to get no satisfaction and soon drop out and go into something else. One of the curses of our profession is the real lack of interest in "dance itself as dance" - in all dancers; their only interest is purely personal and an egotistical one.

Despite the problems there are girls who do have success in the Dance World gained through hard work alone. RUTH ANN KOESUN has had the most expansive career, having danced in many countries of the world with the American Ballet Theatre. At an early age she came to us from Edna Lucile Baum's fine school in Chicago, and upon graduation from high school went to New York to study with Veschiav Swoboda and from there into Ballet Theatre. SHEILA REILLY came to the School through Chicago Children's Civic Theatre and after a brief career in Musicals of necessity began to teach in and around Chicago. She became our assistant and from opportunities offered by the school, became head of the Ballet Department at the National Music Camp at Interlochen Michigan and Marquette University in Milwaukee. Her success in these two areas is well known in the entire Midwest. BONNIE WEST long a vaudeville act with her husband, now heads her own school in Alaska. Another girl to accept responsibilities at home and have success as a

teacher is YVONNE BROWN who teaches in the western suburbs. JOYCE ARANDA another CCT alumni is doing a fine job of teaching in the northern suburbs. ELLEVA DAVIDSON of all things is a teacher of Modern Dance in a mid-western college. ELISSA QUEYQUEP is doing dance therapy in a Brooklyn hospital. The American Ballet Theatre has had many SC girls among them: JOAN EHEMANN, AUDRE DECHMANN, BARBARA STEELE and KAREN KRYCH. The latter has done more in the profession and was last seen in Chicago with the Harkness Company. KAREN was prominent in SC programs all during her High School days with important parts in ten Ballets. She is especially remembered in "Alice in Wonderland", "Hansel and Gretel", "In My Landscape", and most in "In Whom I Live Dying". Our most recent BT girl is NAOMI SORKIN who is rising rapidly in the company. Currently everyone in the school knows and admires DOLORES LIPINSKI for her beautiful and exciting performance of "Spring Waters" with Charles Schick. From this performance she was engaged by Frederick Franklin for the National Ballet Company in Washington DC. She, too, danced in many SC ballets and is most remembered in Mr. Stone's "Les Biches". Dolores had several seasons as a featured dancer with the Ruth Page International Ballet and the Chicago Lyric Opera Company. BONNIE MATHIS and ALEXIS HOFF were recently made soloists in the Harkness Company and have a very promising future ahead of them. Bonnie, especially, has a versatility that is rare in young artists today. Here at home PEGGY POWELL is a featured dancer with the Illinois Ballet Company. MARI LYNN BROWN and JONIE JAMES are dancers who have switched to singing with considerable success. MARI LYNN was our little 'Match Girl' one season. ERUMETH HIRSCH combines being a first rate singer with being an excellent dancer as well. In the acting field these girls began as dancers and have had more opportunities as actresses. JANICE RULE, JUDI WEST, DONNA MILLS and COLLEEN KELLY and now on the other side of the water JUDY CONWAY is on her second assignment in TV in Hamburg Germany as an actress, - When we saw her on the Bejart Special, we all felt that acting might really be her line. It will be interesting to see what becomes of some of the girls of the last few years - ELISABETH WINEBERG, CARREN CHESHIER,

MAGGIE SMITH, JORENE HOLAS, PAMELA JUSTICK, LAUREN ROUSE and MARTY INGLE. Will they be the ones to stick it out through all the heartaches as had DOLORES LIPINSKI and KAREN KRYCH?

Letter from JULIE BICKING:

To all My Friends at Stone-Camryn:

I have tried for several weeks now to think of a very clever way to say what's on my mind. I have a waste basket full of crumpled paper, each piece with a different introduction, none of which satisfied me. I finally decided to forget the journalistic tricks and write a letter to you; maybe because I feel this way, I can speak to you directly from my heart.

Some of you know, some of you may not, that I was born and raised in a small town in Indiana. I began dancing lessons when all the other girls on my block started the weekly visit to dancing school. I attended classes faithfully, getting a taste of ballet, tap, jazz and acrobatic. Well, I was destined from the start never to be an acrobat, whether for reasons of distaste or just plain cowardice I don't know. At any rate, this phase of my training was soon eliminated from the curriculum. As I grew, the dancing school became a regular part of my life, and long after my friends had quit their dance "careers", I was to be found three or four times a week at the studio, working either in class or by myself. You see, I had decided - I was going to be a ballerina. Does the story sound familiar?

I think I was a high school sophomore when I began pleading with my parents to send me to New York to finish school at the School of Performing Arts. (I had read the most intriguing article about it in Dance Magazine!) I knew my parents loved me and wanted to do for me what was best, but how could I make them understand that to be a ballerina, one must be in the center of the dance world? (You must understand that I was a bit of a strange duck in our family -- a dancer!) There really was never any question of my going to the school in New York. I remember it something like this:

"No daughter of mine is going to New York at sixteen and ...". And that was it. But, Oh, how I envied those lucky kids in the magazine.

The next big decision concerning my dance education was in regard to a college for me to attend. Though at the time I didn't want to go to school anymore, I soon found out in much the same manner as before, that I would not be allowed to go to Chicago or New York and study dance; I would go to college. So before long, I was on my way to Evanston, Illinois. Actually, I really was very excited because I would be able to study dance in Chicago while at the University. I soon found my way to the Stone-Camryn School of Ballet. It wasn't long before I realized how very lucky I was to be there. You couldn't have shooed me away to New York for anything. Studying at Stone-Camryn, I found out what it was all about. Slowly, I formulated some ideas of what I was directing myself towards. I knew I needed at least four years of good training before I tried my wings, but I still set my sights on New York as the only alternative in pursuing dance.

During those four years, I watched, I listened, I worked hard and I learned. It seems rather strange, though, that the most valuable part of my training there, I know now, was not technique. I don't mean to say that technique isn't important, or even essential, but I have found that technique is taught efficiently in a lot of good ballet schools. But there is so much more to dance, and I wonder if you who study there, realize how lucky you are to be exposed to the "much more".

My so-called "dream" has come true; I am living in New York and I have studied at Ballet Theatre, at Harkness House, at the Joffrey School and I have worked with Matt Mattox in his ballet company. What more could I ask than to be so close to so many resources? Well, I might ask for the beautiful classes that I knew from the Stone-Camryn School; I might ask for a little creativity in class rather than sixteen battements tendues in each direction and thirty-two frappes in second position; I might ask for movement (I think it's nice to be able to stand on one leg for seven hours, but if you can't do

a decent glissade to get there, you look like a grizzly bear trying to be graceful.) I might ask for the same cleanliness in people and buildings that was always insisted on at Stone-Camryn; I might ask for the exhilaration I used to feel during and after class because the class had been so beautiful; I might ask for discipline as I knew it in Chicago, and a little respect thrown in respect for the human body as well as for the human personality. It is horrible to see people who have forgotten how to smile, how to laugh at themselves; there are those who have forgotten how to help and be helped; those who have forgotten how to be human. I guess it's just an entirely different atmosphere that I've found here in New York, and even at a supposedly "adult" twenty-two years of age, I'm not ashamed to admit I'm homesick for the way things were at the Stone-Camryn School in Chicago. I know now that Mr. Stone and Mr. Camryn are not only teaching their students to be dancers, but to be people -- and, oh, how valuable that is. If I may offer just a little extra advice to all of you: listen to what is said in class. Many little pearls of wisdom are dropped; pick them up and apply them, not only to dance, but to life. Feel fortunate that your teachers are real people, not just dance personalities.

I have spent a lot of words here and I'm not sure I've made my point. What I am trying to tell you is: don't be in a hurry to get to New York. Look around you, be aware of what you have, take your time, and get good training. Get your feet on the ground and get your goals, your standards firmly established. New York is a great city, but it is brutal. In my opinion, it is no place for a young person to learn to dance; at best, it is an exposure to many different styles, methods, and so forth, which are valuable but in order to take advantage of these opportunities, one must already be able to dance; it is no way to learn.

I'm not telling you not to come to New York; I have no right to do so. All I'm saying is, take your time. I'm not really sure I'm old enough to intelligently handle New York, and I'm 22.

I've seen too many girls alone in New York, too young; I've seen the tragedy that results. I can promise you that I keep a very close contact with my home and family to preserve whatever ideals, values etc., that I had been taught were so important in life. There are too many people in New York who have lost contact and forgotten . . .

I suppose there will come a time when you must come to New York. . . I had to. But please, come prepared. Don't forget all you've learned at Stone-Camryn. Remember and continue to work for good port de bras, proper use of epaulement, placement, and remember always to analyze as you have been taught. When you get here, you'll be in classes where you will be expected to do things differently than you've been taught. Do as you are asked and learn what you can from it, but don't forget to go back to the basics of good technique.

Well, all in all, I'm very grateful for the chance to have come to New York. Now I've seen and I know. I am very anxious to get back to Chicago and the kind of dance I knew there . . . the kind of people and the kind of life I knew. I have said what I felt I had to say. Take it for what it is worth to you, but please don't discount it. Take another look around, think, learn, be patient and thank God for all your blessings.

Very, very sincerely,

Julie Bicking.

How many of these Great Books on the Theatre have you read?

1 - Theater Street - Karsavina

2 - Prince Of Players -
Eleanor Ruggles

3 - Oscar Hammerstein I -
Vincent Sheehan

4 - Laurette - Margeurtie Courtney

5 - Good Night - Sweet Prince -
Gene Fowler

6. - Minutes Of The Last Meeting
Gene Fowler

7 - Voices Off Stage - Marc Connally

8 - Madame Sarah -
Cornelia Otis Skinner

9. - On Reflection - Helen Hayes

10 - The Movies, Mr. Griffith and Me.
Lillian Gish